

unto him. But in that case, satisfaction with half measures must not be tolerated. If we do, vague love for a far-away God will more than ever fail us. The free and untrammelled life, that joyfully proclaims: I love the Lord, alone can save. For it does not remain standing afar off, but seeks access to the immediate presence of God, in personal contact of soul with the Eternal.

2

“THE SOULS WHICH I HAVE MADE.”

There is a peculiar charm about the thing which we have made. Not because of any intrinsic value it may have, but just because we have made it. The new beginner at the art of portrait-painting, who practices his art by copying celebrated originals, will think more of his own copy than of the more excellent original. Flowers which the young lad plucks from his own little garden are much more interesting to him than the bouquet from the florist. The country gentleman prefers vegetables from his own grounds or hothouse, even if less fine, to the produce imported from abroad. He who writes for the press deems his own article, published in some monthly or quarterly, the best of the edition. This holds good in every department of life. Produce raised ourselves interests us greatly. Cattle bred on our own stock farm is preferred to any other. We are more happy in the house which we have built.

Of course, this implies some self-complacency, which especially in youth is apt to breed conceit. We grant that preference for our own work can go too far, as when from sheer egotism it makes us

undervalue better works from other hands. This is evident in mother-joy, which revels in play with its own child, such as is impossible in play with a neighbor's child. Self-delusion and selfishness may at times be too evident in this joy of the mother heart, but history and folklore in all lands and times bear witness that there vibrates another string in mother love than that of selfishness, the sound of which can only be understood when it is recalled that she bore the child. The mother is conscious of a part of her own life in that of her child. The two do not stand side by side as Nos. 1 and 2, but the mother-life extends itself in that of her child.

This trait is evident in every product of our own, whether of our thought, of our manual labor, or of our perseverance. And whether it is an article which we contributed, or a house which we built, a piece of embroidery which we worked, or a flower which we planted, a hound or a race-horse which we raised, there is something in it of our own, something that we put upon it, a something of our very selves, of our talent, of our invention, which makes us feel toward it as we never can feel toward things which are not of our own making.

And by this human trait God comforts the hearts of sinners. This trait is in us, because it is in God. Regarding this trait God declares that it operates in the Divine Fatherheart in our behalf. For where there is a soul at stake, God never forgets that He has made it. "For I will not contend forever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made (Is. 57:16). As little as a mother

can allow her just anger with the child of her own bosom to work itself out to the end, just so little can God's wrath with a soul fully exhaust itself, because He has made it. As a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him (Ps. 103). "Though a mother may forget her sucking child, yet will I not forget thee" (Is. 49:15).

The Fathername of God expresses this same comforting thought. It implies not merely that human fathers love, and that God loves too, but that both the love of human parents and the love of God spring from the same source, to-wit: that God has created and made the soul that is in us. That we are created after God's image implies that God is conscious of the relation which He sustains to us. The High and Holy One finds something of himself in us, because we are his own products. As his own creatures, we are objects of his Divine interest. There is something of God in the soul, because He has made it. It bears the Divine stamp. There is something of God's power in it, of his thought and creative genius, as there is in nothing else. We are God's handiworks, no two of which are ever exactly alike. Imagine that we were gone, and the vast collection of the Lord would no more be complete. From this the tie between God and the soul is born, which makes each of us a star in his firmament which the Father of Spirits can not afford to lose. And therefore the Lord seeks what is lost.

An artist who has paintings on exhibition in a gallery and finds one of them gone, can not rest until it has been traced and restored to its place on the wall. In like manner God misses the

soul that has gone astray, because He has made it. The beautiful parables of the lost penny, the lost sheep and the lost son sprang in the mind of Christ from the thought that God can not let go the works of his hands. Therefore He does not leave the souls of sinners indifferently as prey to corruption. They are his handiwork. And this constitutes the bitterness of sin.

If on entering the gallery one day the aforementioned artist saw that an angry intruder had wantonly, under cover of night, cut his paintings with a knife, his bitterness of soul would know no bounds, not merely because these paintings had been destroyed as treasures of art, but as works of his own hands. This insult has been inflicted upon God. The soul which He has made has been inwardly torn asunder by sin and has become almost irre recognizable. And as often as we yield to sin, the soul is spoiled still further. It is every time the continuance with uplifted hand of the work of ruining the soul, which belongs to God, because He made it.

The destruction of one's own soul, or of the soul of his children or of others by example or wilful temptation, is always the spoiling of a Divine work of art, a creation of God, which wounds him in his own handiwork, corrupting the traces of himself in it. It is as though a child is wounded and slain before his mother's eyes. It is defiance of the maker's love for his handiwork. It is wilfully giving offense, and grieving the maker in his most sensitive point.

To him, therefore, whose heart is right, this saying of the Lord, "The souls which I have made," has a two-fold meaning. First, the comforting

thought that, if we believe, God's anger with the soul which He has made will not continue to the end. And, on the other hand, it implies the helpful warning that we should not poison the soul by continuance in sin, but that we should favor it, and spare it, and shield it from corrupting influences, because it belongs to God on the ground that He has made it. The confession that God created man after his own image does not exhaust the fulness of the thought in hand. The plummet goes far deeper. The saving and uplifting power of this confession is only felt when each morning is begun anew with the vivid realization of the inspiring thought that the soul in us is a work of art, made by the High and Holy One, on which his Honor hangs, over which therefore He watches with holy jealousy; and that we can not ruin it by sin except as we commit crime against that, to which God sustains the peculiar relation of being its Author and Maker.

Thus "The souls which I have made" does not say anything more, save that we should realize that we are the children of God; but it states it in a more gripping way. It declares that he who by sin denies his heavenly Father, violates God's honor and grieves the Fatherheart.

### 3

## "RICH IN GOD."

Jesus has appreciated the grave character of the struggle in life between God and money. It may be said that this struggle is even more violent in Western lands than in the East, where he preached and went about doing good, because